from elsewhere. Any amount spent on this account would not be in vain. Years ago when silk industry was on its wane in France on account of a pest, the French Government approached Dr. Pasteur who after much research and labour was able to diagnose the disease and find out a remedy and thereby saved a national industry from ruin. Similar action should be taken by this Government also to find out ways and means for eradicating the plant pest and save the majority of the people of Travancore from misery and hopelessness.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Matthai Mutalali, I trust that the Department does not deserve the attack you have made. And, I am afraid, you have not made any new suggestion. The Department has done all it could do to introduce improved methods of cultivation; and it is always ready to advise people who come and ask for advice. But there is this difficulty; people ask for advice and do not act according to it. Recently, the Mycologist had been to Ceylon to study the work done there to combat the diseases of the cocoanut palm. He has come back, and the report about the result of his studies there will soon be published. The Department will, in future, I hope, continue to help the country, but can do so only if the people, who come for advice, will take the advice.

23. Development of agriculture in the Shencotta taluk.

MR. S. K. SUBRAHMANYA AIYAR (*Shencotta taluk*) said that geographically Shencotta occupied a peculiar position when compared with the rest of Travancore. Like the rest of the State, Shencotta was an agricultural tract but because of its peculiar position it called for an entirely different treatment at the hands of the Government. Shencotta had a large number of irrigation tanks having but a small storage capacity. As a result of several representations, these tanks were improved to a certain extent and their control was vested in the Maramat and the Revenue Departments. But there were still some defects, for remedying which, certain suggestions were made at the 23rd session of the Assembly, such as the holding of agricultural conferences, formation of an irrigation board, etc. Action was promised on these suggestions and it should be taken promptly.

The distinction between major and minor irrigation works should be done away with. The water flowing through a major *kal* was treated differently when it entered a minor *kal*. The owner of a land irrigated by a major *kal* was immune from any payment for the cost of the work while the owner of a land irrigated by the minor *kal* was asked to contribute a share torwards the cost of the work. This distinction was unjustifiable and should cease to exist.

With the fall in the price of paddy to half its normal price and with uncertain and unseasonal rains, the ryots in Shencotta were facing a menacing danger. To conserve water by enlarging the storage capacity of the irrigation tanks was the only practical way of helping the ryots from failure of crops or unsuccessful cultivation. The Tank Restoration Scheme had not alleviated the distress of the ryots to any

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appreciable extent. The funds available for working out the scheme were limited and the works large in number. Tanks were taken up for restoration one after another in the order of urgency. But the work being only one of maintenance no substantial improvement was done to the tanks. With more funds, the scheme would work better.

The Demonstration Farm at Puliyara was opened with the object of demonstrating the methods of intensive cultivation by the use of good seeds, improved manures, etc. But the farm, being situated in an out of the way and inaccessible place, was not serving its purpose. The total area of the farm was about 30 acres, of which only 3 acres were actully brought under *nanja* cultivation. There were no water facilities. The yield on the farm was only 2 per cent. per annum on its outlay. The outside demonstrations conducted by the farm have been stopped. In the circumstances, the farm did not justify its existence. It should therefore be disposed of in auction and with the proceeds of sale, some wet lands in the heart of the town should be purchased for opening a demonstration farm. If this was not feasible, demonstration might be conducted on the extensive premises of the Taluk Office, the District Hospital and the P. W. D. Sub-Division Office.

Agricultural loans were generally granted only for the purpose of improving lands and not for meeting the cost of cultivation. The landlords generally leased their lands for cultivation and the lessees found it difficult to obtain loans for cultivating the land, so much so, that there was not even a single application for loan in 1107 in the Shencotta taluk. The result was that the yield was poor, not even sufficient to pay the landlords. This state of affairs could be remedied by issuing rules under the Land Improvement and Agricultural Loans Regulation, IX of 1094, enabling lessees also to obtain loans. Branches of the Land Mortgage Bank should be opened in mofussil parts with the object of issuing loans to agriculturists for purchasing seeds, manure, etc., subject to suitable conditions.

Lastly, the member urged the need for holding agricultural exhibitions and conferences. Only one such conference was held subsequent to the 21st session of the Assembly although time and again the need for holding such conferences had been pressed on the Government.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Subrahmanya Aiyar, the Government are considering at the moment the report of the Minor Irrigation Committee. When the proposal for an irrigation board was first put forward, there was no idea of having a separate Irrigation Division. Probably, we shall have to wait and see how the Irrigation Division works before the necessity for an irrigation board is examined.

As regards the Demonstration Farm at Puliyara, the Director of Agriculture thinks that it works best at the present site. If it is moved to the Taluk Office or to the Sub-Division Office, it will be most inconvenient to the general public and to the officers who go there. I shall, however, visit the farm when I go to Shencotta, and see what can be done.

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The issue of agricultural loans is regulated by certain rules framed for the purpose, and I cannot now say whether they need any amendment or not.

The question of holding agricultural conferences and exhibitions is, at the moment, under the consideration of Government. Proposals are being received from the heads of the various departments, and Government are considering them.

24. Punja cultivation in Kuttanad with special reference to the Kottayam taluk.

MR. K. U. ITTYAVIRA (*Kottayam taluk, Group I*) thanked the Government for the help rendered by them to the ryots of Kuttanad in granting special agricultural loans and also for opening the Land Mortgage Bank. Agriculture was the mainstay of the pople of Travancore. But the majority of the agriculturists were at the moment involved in debt. Scientific methods of cultivation, use of improved ploughs, facilities for obtaining loans on easy terms, and facilities for marketing agricultural products to the best advantage, were absent in the State and the ryots were, in consequence, subject to hardship and loss. It was the duty of the Government to help the ryots placed in such a situation and if timely help was not rendered, the economic prosperity of the people and the State would go down. The member made the following suggestions for improving the condition of the ryots :—

(1) Establishment of an agricultural board in Kuttanad.

(2) Provision of an allotment of Rs. 2 lakhs every year for grant of agricultural loans to *punja* cultivators.

(3) Remission of tax on *punja* lands damaged by breach of bunds.

(4) Construction of a bund connecting Tannirmukkam with Vechur and of small bunds across the canals falling into the Kumarakam backwater in order to prevent the flow of brackish water into the *punja* lands.

(5) Opening of a branch of the Land Mortgage Bank at Kottayam.

(6) Opening of a demonstration farm and a manure depot at Kumarakam.

(7) Supply of kerosene oil to *punja* cultivators during the cultivation season through Government agency.

(8) Issue of loans at low rates of interest to co-operative societies of agriculturists.

(9) Cutting open the Maveli *todu* branching off from the Illikkal river.

(10) Appointment of a commission to enquire into the condition of the *punja* cultivators to suggest ways and means for improving it.

DEWAN'S REPLY : Mr. Ittyavira, you have mentioned in your representation ten different subjects.

In regard to the establishment of an agricultural board, if the people will take the initiative in the matter, Government will render them all possible help.

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